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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT OBAMA'S SEPTEMBER 23 MEETING WITH TOP UN
TROOP CONTRIBUTING COUNTRIES

USUN NEW Y 00000866 001.2 OF 012

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Immediately following his address to the Open Debate of the UN General Assembly on September 23, President Obama convened an unprecedented meeting with the Heads of State and Foreign Ministers of the top contributors of troops and police to UN peacekeeping operations. President Obama expressed the United States' appreciation for their efforts. He stated that "the United States is ready to do its part" to address key challenges now confronting UN peacekeeping. He said the U.S. will "meet our financial obligations for UN peacekeeping operations in

full and settle past debts that were accumulated between 2005 and 2009." He stressed that the U.S. is "intensifying our diplomatic efforts to revitalize peace processes on Darfur, Sudan's North-South conflict and the DRC." He emphasized that the U.S. is "ready to increase and improve our bilateral efforts to train and equip others' peacekeepers," "to help the UN to mobilize missing critical enabling units," and "is willing to consider contributing more U.S. civilian police, civilian personnel, and military staff officers to UN missions." He said the United States would "support bold new proposals to improve the effectiveness of UN support to its field operations." He added that "we will review our bilateral assistance to post-conflict societies and fragile states, and make building local capacity a priority." Finally, President Obama indicated that the U.S. would "welcome discussions in the coming year on a vision for the future of UN peacekeeping."

¶2. (U) Eight Heads of State and Government—from Bangladesh, Ghana, Italy, Nepal, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal and Uruguay—attended and took the floor. Several praised President Obama's speech delivered before the General Assembly and thanked him for this initiative. They called for greater alignment between peacekeeping mandates and the means available to implement them. They highlighted difficulties with training and equipping their troops. They appealed to the Security Council to consult them properly before revising mission mandates. They stressed that peacekeeping operations must follow effective political and peace-making efforts and not be used as a "band-

USUN NEW Y 00000866 002.2 OF 012

aid" or substitute for them. Several noted the imperative to find and pursue ways to secure the support of the host population. The final speaker, President Vazquez of Uruguay, made an eloquent pitch for increased focus by peacekeepers on the protection of civilians, as the UN's credibility and legitimacy were at stake.

¶3. (U) President Obama pledged that the United States would follow up with troop contributing countries (TCCs) on the various concerns and challenges raised "on a bilateral as well as multilateral basis" to assure that the TCCs get the "support, respect and thanks they deserve." END SUMMARY.

Opening remarks by POTUS

¶4. (U) President Obama, joined by Secretary Clinton and Ambassador Rice, convened the meeting in a conference room at the United Nations building, shortly after the delivery of his address to the General Assembly. The President explained that he had convened the meeting, "first and foremost, to say thank you" for the efforts and sacrifice of the countries contributing the largest number of troops and police to UN peacekeeping operations. He expressed gratitude for the contributions of Bangladesh, Ghana, Nepal, Italy, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal and Uruguay, represented at the meeting by their Heads of State and Government. He offered appreciation for the contributions of Egypt, Ethiopia, Jordan and Nigeria, represented by their Foreign Ministers, and China, represented by the Permanent Representative to the United Nations. President Obama recognized the contribution of third-ranked contributor, India, which did not participate in the meeting, as well as of South Africa, France, Indonesia, Morocco, Benin, and Brazil (the 15th to 20th ranked contributors—which were not invited because of time constraints). He recognized that more than 100 countries provide uniformed personnel to UN

peacekeeping operations. He also welcomed the attendance of Mr. Alain LeRoy and Ms. Susana Malcorra, UN Under-Secretaries-General for Peacekeeping

USUN NEW Y 00000866 003.2 OF 012

Operations and for Field Support, respectively, and through them conveyed the United States' appreciation for the efforts of thousands of UN civilian staff in the field and at UN headquarters.

¶5. (U) President Obama, describing peacekeeping as "one of the most important activities of the United Nations," stressed that UN operations prevent conflicts from restarting; from escalating; and from potentially provoking wider wars. He said they enabled delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need and protect innocent civilians from physical violence. He also noted that they help emerging democracies hold elections and strengthen the rule of law.

¶6. (U) President Obama outlined key challenges the U.S. believed now confronted UN peacekeeping operations. First, UN peacekeeping operations often face faltering peace processes and critical shortfalls of well-trained and well-equipped troops, police, hospitals, engineers, transport and aviation units. Second, the UN's mission planning and support arrangements need to be retooled to reduce deployment delays, be more responsive to peacekeepers' needs on the ground, and ensure cost-effectiveness and efficiencies. Third, too little attention is given to the peace-building and development priorities that need to accompany the peacekeeping work, including reform of the security and criminal justice sectors. "If we do not help to build local capacity to deliver basic services, repair infrastructure, jump-start the economy, secure territory and uphold rule of law, we cannot expect international peacekeepers to depart without having to return," President Obama remarked. Fourth, he recognized that it is becoming more difficult for peacekeepers to protect civilians from physical violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. "But," he added, "their ability to do so is often the yardstick by which local populations extend their trust and retain their welcome."

¶7. (U) President Obama stated that "the United States is ready to do its part" to address the challenges he outlined. He said the US will "meet our financial

USUN NEW Y 00000866 004.2 OF 012

obligations for UN peacekeeping operations in full and settle past debts that were accumulated between 2005 and 2009." He stressed that the US is "intensifying our diplomatic efforts to revitalize peace processes on Darfur, Sudan's North-South conflict and the DRC." He emphasized that the U.S. is "ready to increase and improve our bilateral efforts to train and equip others' peacekeepers," "to help the UN to mobilize missing critical enabling units," and "is willing to consider contributing more U.S. civilian police, civilian personnel, and military staff officers to UN missions." He said the U.S. would "support bold new proposals to improve the effectiveness of UN support to its field operations." He added that "we will review our bilateral assistance to post-conflict societies and fragile states, and make building local capacity a priority." Finally, President Obama indicated that the U.S. would "welcome discussions in the coming year on a vision for the future of UN peacekeeping," and wanted to ensure that efforts are joined up.

¶8. (U) President Obama explained that, while these were all things the U.S. is considering and prepared to

do, he wanted our ideas and plans to be informed by the contributors' insights and experiences. He was interested in hearing about the challenges they face and about what they thought the UN and US could do to support and improve the overall effectiveness of UN peacekeeping.

Discussion among Heads of State and Government

¶9. (U) President Obama gave the floor first to Prime Minister Hasina, acknowledging Bangladesh as the number one police contributor and second-ranked overall contributor with more than 9,000 uniformed personnel deployed. Prime Minister Hasina spoke for approximately fifteen minutes to educate participants on Bangladesh's participation in 45 UN peacekeeping missions over the last 21 years. Of note, she highlighted scars that still remained from tragedies Bangladeshi peacekeepers experienced in Somalia in the early 1990s. She stressed that Bangladesh believed the success of UN peacekeeping operations hinged on their

USUN NEW Y 00000866 005.2 OF 012

impartiality and ability to win the local populations' hearts and minds.

¶10. (U) Prime Minister Hasina requested U.S. support for the Bangladesh Institute for Peace Support Operations Training (BIPSOT), established in 1999, to be used as a regional peacekeeping training center. She also sought U.S. and UN assistance in securing "military hardware" such as APCs, tanks, helicopters. Finally, Prime Minister Hasina pledged Bangladesh's continued participation in UN peacekeeping and hoped the U.S. would increase its own participation as well. She also invited the President to visit Bangladesh.

¶11. (U) President Obama then turned to President Kagame, mentioning that he had reports of Rwandan troops performing admirably in Darfur, and noting that a Rwandan General had recently become Force Commander of the joint UN-AU mission in Darfur (UNAMID). President Kagame spoke briefly and candidly. He expressed pride in Rwandan troops' performance and willingness to participate even more in future UN peacekeeping operations. But, he believed there was a need to address shortfalls and shortcomings in training and logistics support for such troops. President Kagame also cautioned against an overreliance on peacekeeping forces as a substitute for the domestic political will of the parties to make peace. He emphasized the importance of peacekeeping being undertaken in conjunction with political processes and "not as an end in itself." He urged equal attention to the diplomatic and peace-making efforts required for there to be a "peace to keep" and for that peace to be sustainable.

¶12. (U) President Obama then invited Prime Minister Berlusconi to take the floor, acknowledging that Italy had led Europe's "return to UN peacekeeping", with a sizeable deployment to UNIFIL following hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah in the summer of 2006. President Obama also sought Prime Minister Berlusconi's views on formed police units, given that Italy hosted, with U.S. support, the Center for Excellence of Stability Police Units (COESPU). Prime Minister

USUN NEW Y 00000866 006.2 OF 012

Berlusconi first praised President Obama's "wonderful speech" to the UN General Assembly. "You expressed hopes that were shared by the majority of us Heads of State."

¶13. (U) Prime Minister Berlusconi couched his interventions on international peacekeeping in terms of supporting democracy building and winning the hearts and minds of local populations. Italy had 30,000 personnel rotating through various international missions (e.g., NATO, EU, UN). This included Carabinieri (gendarme-type units), who offered an important capability to interact better with the local population. They had been training-the-trainers in Afghanistan as a way to build local capacity. In general, it was critical not to be perceived as an occupation force and to be seen as useful to the local people, such as through repairing hospitals, schools and infrastructure. He pointed to Italy's efforts in the NATO-led ISAF in Afghanistan, where local commanders had been given resources and authority to assist local populations in these areas, as well as to offer them language training. He suggested that UN missions would similarly benefit, were its commanders given similar authority and resources and not hamstrung by UN bureaucracy. As concerns Italy's experience in UNIFIL, he saw no major problems and considered it a relatively well managed mission.

¶14. (U) President Obama then turned to President Zardari of Pakistan, acknowledging Pakistan as the top contributor with over 10,000 troops and police in several missions, including over 3,000 troops in both the DRC and Liberia. President Zardari, too, praised President Obama's GA speech and applauded this initiative to acknowledge the contributors' efforts. He noted Pakistan was not only the top contributor, but one of the oldest, dating back 40 years. Pakistan "is ready to do much more," he said, stressing that "we want to show that we are a responsible state...to show the world by our actions that we stand by our values." "Democracy may be young in Pakistan," he added "but, we will stand with you and the world wherever needed." He noted a less frequently discussed benefit of PKOs

USUN NEW Y 00000866 007.2 OF 012

offering the opportunity for TCCs to co-mingle and cooperate across cultures. He also expressed appreciation for the U.S. paying its bills, hoping that Pakistan would therefore soon receive what the UN apparently owed it.

¶15. (U) President Obama turned to President Mills of Ghana, which he acknowledged as a long-time contributor to UN peacekeeping operations and host of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre. He asked President Mills to offer thoughts on how to expand the pool of well-trained and well-equipped uniformed personnel for future peacekeeping efforts, especially in Africa. President Mills, too, praised President Obama's speech, saying that, like the one delivered in Accra, it once again reinforced that "you stand for change." Returning to peacekeeping, he reaffirmed his country's commitment to effective UN peacekeeping and willingness to share its experiences. He candidly confessed difficulties Ghana faced in sustaining its contributions in five UN missions, and that "resources could be a problem." The economic downturn made it all the more difficult for Ghana to equip its troops as it would want.

¶16. (U) President Obama then gave the floor to President Wade of Senegal, noting that its largest deployments were in Darfur, DRC and Cote d'Ivoire. President Wade echoed praise for the GA speech and this initiative. He expressed pride in Senegal's engagement in several peacekeeping missions around the world, including with Senegalese in command positions in two of them. Senegal would soon be moving up from 13th to 9th in the rankings of contributors, with additional deployments foreseen to Darfur. He believed that

Senegalese peacekeepers experience and track record accounted for why Guinea said it would not accept peacekeepers from any country, when tensions emerged between Guinea and Liberia. On a related note, President Wade acknowledged peacekeepers' good behavior as critical to retaining their welcome locally.

¶17. (U) President Obama then called on Prime Minister Nepal of Nepal, noting that it has large numbers of

USUN NEW Y 00000866 008.2 OF 012

military and police personnel deployed in several very different types of missions—notably Lebanon, Haiti, Darfur, and Liberia. Prime Minister Nepal congratulated POTUS for his "wonderful, inspiring speech" and commended this TCC meeting as a tangible demonstration of his Administration's commitment to multilateralism. He paid tribute to fallen peacekeepers, said that Nepal was ready to contribute more and presented five challenges needing to be addressed. First, he called for better defined and more innovative mission objectives and strategy. Second, he appealed for a more 'holistic approach,' since problems in conflict zones could not be addressed through any one instrument or tool alone. Peacekeeping missions needed to be accompanied by peace-making efforts. He also mentioned the importance of controlling the traffic of small arms in conflict zones. Third, he stressed the importance of building consensus and unity of effort among all key actors engaged in the effort. Fourth, he highlighted the need for flexibility and adaptability to unique political, logistics and regional challenges. And fifth, he saw the need for greater training and logistics support.

¶18. (U) Prime Minister Nepal concluded his intervention by expressing regret that he was unable to get past the Secret Service the large Ghurka knife he intended to present President Obama as a symbol of Nepalese peacekeepers' bravery and as a token of his appreciation. He invited President Obama to visit Nepal at his earliest opportunity. President Obama undertook to have a word with the Secret Service, keen to get hold of his Ghurka knife.

¶19. (U) President Obama then called on President Vazquez to speak last, acknowledging Uruguay as a key contributor in Haiti and the DRC, a long-time contributor to UN peacekeeping over successive decades, and an active voice on peacekeeping reform. He invited President Vazquez to reflect on challenges needing to be addressed in the coming year. President Vazquez first congratulated POTUS for his "brilliant speech", delivered with "your head and your heart." He saw this TCC meeting as an historic and unprecedented event,

USUN NEW Y 00000866 009.2 OF 012

illustrating that change was possible and welcome.

¶20. (U) President Vazquez noted that his was a nation of 3 million people which contributes 3,000 peacekeepers. He recognized this as a time of great difficulty for the UN system. He expounded on three key challenges confronting UN peacekeeping involving support to missions, effectiveness, and adapting to realities on the ground. First, the system needed to be strengthened and the "yawning gap" narrowed between the ambitious mandates the UN missions are given and the means available to implement them. This would require widening the pool of countries which participate in this global "army of peace." The total cost of UN peacekeeping, he added, was only 0.55% of global military expenditures. Second, the peacekeeping missions needed to be made more effective. Increased

interaction between the Security Council, the TCCs and the Secretariat would help on that front. The United States' commitment to strengthening that relationship was evident not only through this meeting, but in its early convening of discussion with TCCs on the mandate of the UN Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the Security Council's willingness to engage TCCs through the Security Council's Working Group on Peacekeeping, chaired by Japan. Third, peacekeeping missions needed to be more responsive to needs on the ground. In this regard, Uruguay believed more attention was needed on protection of civilians, who today account for 8 out of 10 casualties in conflicts, in contrast to 1 out of 10 in World War I. This focus should include respect for International Humanitarian Law, "the bedrock of international relations." "Each PKO bears witness before the international community to the principles enshrined in the UN Charter and to international law," he proclaimed. All involved needed to strengthen their commitment to progress in these areas; where so many innocent lives are lost, the UN's credibility and legitimacy were at stake. The TCCs, the majority of which were from the developing world, had a critical role to play and wanted to be constructive. He concluded by saying that "we assure you that your government's initiative has not gone unnoticed."

USUN NEW Y 00000866 010.2 OF 012

President Obama's summation

¶21. (U) President Obama concluded by summarizing key themes and points he had taken away from the discussion:

- Peacekeeping mandates and means have to be better aligned;
- The need for expanded training, and ensuring troops are adequately supplied and logistically supported;
- The importance of better coordination and consultation with troop contributors before revision of mandates;
- Peace-making efforts must accompany peacekeeping operations; peacekeeping cannot be used as a "band-aid" or substitute for necessary political processes;
- Protection of civilians is "absolutely critical", one of the most difficult and important tasks for UN peacekeepers;
- It is imperative to find and pursue ways to adapt to realities on the ground and to secure the support of the host population.

¶22. (U) President Obama closed by saying that "my Administration will work bilaterally as well as multilaterally to assure that you get the support, respect and thanks you deserve." He pledged that the United States would continue efforts based on the dialogue today, and follow up with TCCs on the various concerns and challenges raised, to bring attention to these issues.

Statement to the Press

¶23. (U) President Obama released the following statement to the press on conclusion of the meeting.
BEGIN QUOTE:

USUN NEW Y 00000866 011.2 OF 012

Today I met with top troop and police contributing countries to UN missions to express appreciation for their sacrifice, and to exchange views on how to strengthen our efforts to meet common challenges. UN peacekeeping can deliver important results by protecting civilians, helping to rebuild security, and advancing peace around the world. From Sudan to Liberia to Haiti, peacekeeping operations are a cost-effective means for the United States and all nations to share the burden of promoting peace and security.

Over the last ten years, the demands on peacekeeping have grown, and operations have become more complex. It is in all of our interests to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these efforts. To succeed, U.N. missions and contributors need to be better equipped and supported to fulfill ambitious mandates, be it securing territory or protecting civilians from violence, including sexual and gender-based violence.

The United States is ready to do its part. We have met our financial obligations for peacekeeping operations. We seek clear, credible, and achievable peacekeeping mandates in the UN Security Council. We are intensifying diplomatic efforts to support fragile peace processes, including on Darfur, Sudan's North-South conflict, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. We are improving bilateral efforts to train and equip UN peacekeepers and to help the UN mobilize critical enabling units. We are willing to consider contributing more U.S. civilian police, civilian personnel, and military staff officers to UN missions. We will support proposals to make UN mission planning and administrative and logistics support more effective. And we are reviewing our assistance to countries that host UN peacekeeping operations, such as Haiti.

To draw down UN peacekeeping operations responsibly and end them successfully, all of us must do more to help strengthen security and criminal justice sectors and to build up the capacity of governments. Today's meeting was a productive discussion about identifying and addressing these gaps, and pursuing a program for

USUN NEW Y 00000866 012.2 OF 012

ongoing reform and the future success of UN peacekeeping. END QUOTE.
RICE